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Senate

STATEMENT OF SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN

A Tribute to Roz Wyman

Mrs. **FEINSTEIN.** Mr. President, 50 years ago today a young and dynamic woman was elected as a member of the Los Angeles City Council. She was just 22 years old, making her the youngest council member in the City's history.

The fact that such a record has been held for so long is in itself remarkable. But then again, we are talking about a truly remarkable woman, Rosalind Wyman.

For many years now, Roz has worked tirelessly, for her family and friends, for the City she loves, for the State of California, for the Democratic Party, and for women everywhere.

There is a wonderful photo of Roz when she was only 2 years old, smiling up at a portrait of Franklin Roosevelt. Her mother, Sarah, was a precinct captain for FDR's first presidential campaign, running the operation out of the family's

drugstore on 9th Street and Western Avenue, in Los Angeles.

Roz's father, Oscar, worried that such a partisan stance would cost them customers, but Sarah believed that electing Roosevelt was much more important.

Small wonder, then, that Roz developed a deep and abiding passion for political activism and the Democratic Party. Her first campaign was working on behalf of Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, in her ill-fated 1950 Senate race against Richard Nixon, when he unfairly portrayed her as "the Pink Lady."

Then, two years later, Roz made history by becoming the youngest person ever elected to the L.A. City Council, and only its second woman member. She went on to serve in that body for the next 12 years, on the finance and budget committees, and eventually

becoming President Pro-Tempore.

As another woman who entered California politics in the 1950s, I can assure you that it was quite a different world back then. It was still very much a male club. In both Los Angeles and San Francisco, one was hard-pressed to find a women's bathroom anywhere near the chambers.

Something else Roz inherited from her mother was a love for baseball. In fact, there is nowhere that Roz Wyman would rather be than at Dodger Stadium, at the home plate corner of the Dodger dugout, where she has had her seats for over forty years now.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Dodgers would not have come to Los Angeles without the vision, fortitude and sheer determination of Roz Wyman. Just ask Tommy Lasorda, who said: "What this lady did for

baseball in this city, they should erect a monument to her."

Today, it is hard to believe how polarizing the effort was to bring the Dodgers from Brooklyn in the late 1950s. Yet Roz, believing that a professional sports team was just what L.A. needed to cement its image as a major American city, braved death threats and earned many political enemies in order to see this come about.

One year after coming to L.A., however, the Dodgers went on to win the World Series, as they did again in 1963, 1965, 1981 and 1988, along with three National League Championships in the 1970s. No one today could imagine the City without one of baseball's greatest franchises.

One of the other defining moments in the modern history of Los Angeles, which placed the city firmly on the map as one of America's premier cities, was when it hosted the Democratic Convention in 1960.

And here, too, Roz Wyman played a vital, even pivotal role. She was an ardent Kennedy supporter, having supported him in 1956, in his unsuccessful bid for the vice presidential nomination.

She understood the natural connection between Hollywood and Washington, and before many others recognized Kennedy's enormous charisma and appeal, along with the growing importance of television to electoral politics.

And with her late husband, Eugene, who served as Chairman of the California Democratic Party, they proved to be extraordinarily effective fund raisers and campaigners. They were responsible for enlisting the likes of Frank Sinatra to sing by the swimming pool, as Kennedy worked his political magic with the delegates.

It is easy to forget that back then, party conventions were not the largely scripted events that they are today. There was real drama -- nothing was inevitable -- and delegates could change their vote at the last minute.

Such was Roz's influence with the Kennedy campaign, that she was able to convince Robert Kennedy to change the venue for JFK's fabled "New Frontier" speech from the Sports Arena to the grander Memorial Coliseum next door.

She went on, eight years later, to work closely on Robert Kennedy's bid for the

White House, which ended so tragically in Los Angeles.

During the 1970s, both with her husband Gene and after his unexpected passing, Roz was a highly effective advocate for the Democratic Party, raising awareness on a wide array of issues.

I first met Roz when I was Mayor of San Francisco and she served as Convention Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the 1984 Democratic National Convention, the first woman -- Democrat or Republican -- ever selected to run a Presidential Convention. In that position she oversaw the entire planning and management of the convention and its \$13 million budget.

We soon became close friends, forming a bond that has grown ever stronger over the years. She was already a living legend, already a star of our party, and she did an absolutely stellar job, not just for the Democratic Party but for the city of San Francisco.

President Clinton recognized Roz's contribution, back in 2000, when he said: "She reminds me of my ties to my roots. Her loyalty to our party and our candidates is something I hope I can emulate for the rest of my life."

I share President Clinton's sentiments – and I, too, hope that I can emulate Roz Wyman. A pioneering force in American politics, she is my Field Marshall, my trusted adviser, and most importantly to me, my very dear friend.